

Approved Minute

by Boulder Friends Meeting, May 2021

Minute in Support of a Truth and Healing Commission for Native Peoples

Brought forward by the Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee

The Boulder Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends supports the “Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act” (HR 8420) that was considered by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019-2020. Although HR 8420 did not become law, Boulder Meeting continues to support the establishment of a Truth and Healing Commission. The bill’s purpose was to set up a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Native American and Alaska Native children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the 1960s and placed in Indian Boarding schools. The children were taught to reject their Native languages, cultures, and spiritual practices and adopt Euro-American culture. Native Americans continue to suffer multigenerational trauma caused by this policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide. Quakers were among the strongest supporters of the Indian boarding school policy and operated some 30 Indian schools (some in collaboration with the federal government) for varying periods of time.

Senator Elizabeth Warren is working with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and plans to reintroduce the bill this year. Senator Warren will consult with the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition for wording for the bill. It is expected to be introduced before the August Congressional recess, with wording very similar to last year’s bill.

Boulder Meeting urges Friends to watch for this bill and give it their support through Friends Committee on National Legislation and other means. Boulder Meeting makes modest annual donations to support the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, the Southern Arapaho language education program, Isna Wica Owayawa Loneman School on Pine Ridge, and the cultural youth camps on Pine Ridge reservation, all of which support positive Indigenous identity formation among Native youth. Boulder meeting encourages Friends to learn the history of the Quaker Indian schools and consider additional ways to support Native-managed healing processes.